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V CORPS ARMOR TROOPS SHOW KOREA THEIR DISTINGUISHED SHOOTING SKILLS

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SEOUL, Republic of Korea -- Six kilometers south of the Demilitarized Zone that separates South Korea from North Korea, far from their home station in Germany and locked inside the little worlds of their tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry of V Corps' 1st Armored Division scan the mountainous horizon for enemy engagements.



SGT CHRISTOPHER STANIS

A Bradley Fighting Vehicle commander with V Corps' Comanche Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, checks the range after his vehicle fired at Rodriguez Range in South Korea. The 1st Armored Division unit got a chance to get in some range time while in the country for the annual training exercise Operation Foal Eagle.

Before long a target is spotted and the vehicle commander gives the command -- "Fire!"

"On the way!" responds the gunner. The round rips through the cool, dry air. It's a hit. Now the crew just has to do that nine more times.

War hasn't broken out on the Korean peninsula. It's the kind of training Bradley and tank crews go through annually to qualify in "Table VIII gunnery" -- individual crew qualifications. But this year, two platoons from 1-1st's Comanche Troop, who

conducted gunnery in February at Germany's Grafenwoehr Training Area, got a second chance to achieve that elusive perfect score of 1,000.

The opportunity came about while the troops were participating in the annual training exercise Operation Foal Eagle here.

"Any time you get to shoot gunnery is a good opportunity," said Capt. Chase Metcalf, Comanche Troop commander.

Metcalf said he was pleased with the high numbers his cavalrymen were scoring up on the tables.

The troop racked up a number of superior and distinguished rankings. A "superior" is rated as 800 points or higher. "Distinguished" goes to crews that shoot 900 points or more.

Despite working with several handicaps -- an unfamiliar range; mountainous terrain rougher than 'Graf,' and pre-positioned war stock equipment far older than their own gear in Germany -- the Soldiers adapted and overcame. One tank crew even captured the coveted 1,000.

Tank C4-4, crewed by tank commander Staff Sgt. Aaron Johnston, gunner Spc. Russel Pace, driver Pfc. Raymond James and loader Pfc. Donovan Chee, loader, took the honor.

Overall, the two platoons averaged a score of "distinguished."

"These guys have once again proved that they are the top platoons in the squadron, and can take on anyone, any time, anywhere in the world," said Metcalf. "I am very proud of them and would take them to war right now."

